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A COURSE IN HANDWRITING. II

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In the first article the directions and exercises for the first four weeks of a course in handwriting for Grade I were presented. Before proceeding with the presentation of the lessons for the remainder of the first grade, we may notice some of the characteristics of the course as they are exemplified by the first year's work.

Adaptation to age.—The difficulty of the work in handwriting is tempered for the young children, first, by employing large writing. In the first grade it is recommended that the paper be ruled with lines one inch apart and that the small letters be three-eighths of an inch high. The size may be reduced somewhat toward the latter part of the year. Large writing permits of the use of coarse materials and does not demand as great accuracy as small writing.

In the second place, the speed of movement required is much less in the beginning than later. The first time the metronome is used, in the second month of the first grade, it is set at 50 beats a minute. At the end of the course it is set at 176 beats a minute. The writing movement should never be so slow as to lose its continuity but, on the other hand, it should not be so fast as to cause the child to lose control of the stroke. This is the principle on which the choice of rates of writing has been made.

Third, materials are recommended for the primary grades which are easy for the child to use. These include the blackboard and chalk, rough-surfaced paper in large sheets, and soft pencils.

Content and organization.—The letters and words in the exercises are selected on the basis of two considerations. First, the vocabulary is carefully chosen from among the words in frequent use by the children for whom the exercises are designed. The sentences and literary selections introduced in the latter part of the year are selected on the same principle.

The second consideration relates to the form of the letters and the type of movement by which they are written. This governs the order in which the letters are introduced. Thus the letters in which the movement is opposite to that of the hands of a clock are grouped together and introduced before those in which the movement is the reverse. The letters which are made by a mixed movement come last. In the early part of each year's work only words which contain letters already practiced are included. Similarly, the early sentences contain only words already practiced.

Much repetition is given, but practice on the same exercise is spread over a number of days or even weeks, and several exercises are used on a given day. This is done to avoid monotony and to take advantage of the benefits of distributed practice.

Method.—Good position and natural, easy penholding are insisted on from the start and continually. A free and continuous movement of the hand across the page is one of the chief objects of practice and is procured by the wide-spaced exercises. A combined movement of the hand and fingers, with the fingers taking the chief part in forming the letters, is recognized as the natural one. The writing movement is made regular, smooth, and fluent by means of rhythm brought about by writing to a count, not merely movement exercises, but also letters and words. The count on the earlier exercises of each grade is carefully indicated by numbers written beside each combined upward and downward stroke. Each exercise must be written to count by the teacher on the blackboard. Care must be taken to see that the children follow the count.

The exercises and directions for the first month have been given. The lessons for the rest of the year will have to be greatly condensed. Of the exercises themselves enough examples are given to illustrate new forms or to indicate the count. The full list of the exercises is given below in the form of verbal statement. Words or letters are not to be joined unless so directed. The number of times on a line is indicated by a number in parentheses, and joining is indicated by the letter j.

15. *b* (3) j

16. *but* (2)

17. *be* (3)

18. *a* (3) j

19. *at* (3)

20. *all* (2)

21. *ball* (2)
22. *a* (3)
23. *d* (3) j
24. *bad* (2)
25. *bed* (2)
26. *o* (3) j
27. *to* (3)
28. *do* (3)
29. *o* (5)
30. *w* (3) j
31. *we* (2)
32. *7* (5)
33. *8* (5)
34. *two* (2)
35. *9* (5)
36. *10* (4)
37. *c* (3) j
38. *cat* (2)
39. *f* (3) j
40. *fall* (2)
41. *A* (4)
42. *of* (3)
43. *m* (3) j
44. *me* (2)
45. *am* (2)
46. *n* (3) j
47. *can* (2)
48. *in* (3)
49. *and* (2)
50. *man* (1)
51. *no an on* (1)
52. *g* (3) j
53. *go* (2)
54. *dog* (2)
55. *E* (4)
56. *A dog* (1)
and cat (1)
57. *we can* (1)
fall we (1)
58. *let me do* (1)
it let me (1)
59. *tie a bad* (1)
dog tie (1)
60. *h* (3) j
h (3) j; *h* (2) j
61. *he the* (1)
62. *him* (2)
63. *C* (4)
64. *Can* (2)
65. *Can we* (1)
fall? *Can* (1)
66. *O* (4)
67. *O let me* (1)
do it. *O* (1)
68. *p* (4) j
69. *up* (3)
70. *let me up* (1)
71. *y* (3)
72. *my* (2)
73. *boy you* (1)
74. (See exercise)
75. *s* (3) j
76. *see* (2)
77. *is us is* (1)
78. *she* (2)
79. *r* (3) j
80. *ran* (2)
81. *run* (2)
82. *B Ben Boys* (1)
83. *k* (3) j
84. *look* (2)
85. *I* (4)
86. *J* (4)
87. *v* (2); *ve* (2)
88. *have* (1)
89. *M* (3)
90. *N* (4)
91. *x* (4)
92. *six* (2)
93. *P* (2); *Paul* (1)
94. *W* (2); *Will* (1)
95. *Y* (2); *You* (1)
96. *U* (4)
97. *R* (2); *Run* (1)
98. *Run to me* (1)
99. *L* (2); *Let* (1)

100. *S* (2); *See* (1)101. *See the* (1)*dog run* (1)102. *G* (2); *Go* (2)103. *H* (2); *He* (2)*can see* (1)*me. He can* (1)104. *K* (2); *Kate* (1)105. *D* (2); *Do* (2)106. *F* (4)107. *Do you see* (1)*Mary? Do* (1)

During the first month fourteen new exercises were introduced. These included the letters *i*, *u*, *t*, *e*, and *l* and the digits from 1 to 5. Four simple words were also given. The reader may be impressed with the small amount of material presented and with the fact that the child cannot for some time use his writing as a means of communicating his thoughts. It should be remembered, however, that learning to write is primarily a matter of acquiring manual skill. The child will later use handwriting as a means of expression, but he cannot use it for this purpose until he is able to write with ease. To give the pupil practice in handwriting merely as an act of skill will hasten rather than retard its development as a means of expression. One need not be troubled, moreover, by the fact that the child's attempt to master these exercises is not impelled chiefly by a desire to express his thoughts in writing. He is sufficiently impelled by his interest in rhythmical activity, particularly in company with others, and in competitive accomplishment.

During the second month Exercises 15 to 38 are introduced. These include the letters *b*, *a*, *d*, *o*, *w*, and *c*, the digits from 6 to 9, and twelve simple words. The progressive character of the letter exercises may readily be discovered. The letters *i*, *u*, and *t* involve a simple forward stroke and a down stroke. The loop letters, *e* and *l*, require a slight modification.

The *b* introduces for the first time a stroke which is characteristic of a number of letters, namely *a*, *f*, *g*, *k*, *o*, *p* (if made with a closed loop), *q*, *s*, *v*, *w*, and *z*. In each of these letters the stroke approaches or meets another line so as partially or wholly to inclose an area of the letter, and then turns off in a radically different direction. At this point of turning there is usually a pause, or at least a very material slowing down of the stroke. This slowing down and the control of the stroke which results from it are furthered by the use of counting.



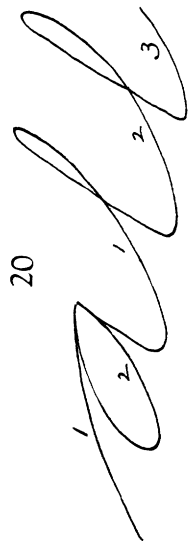
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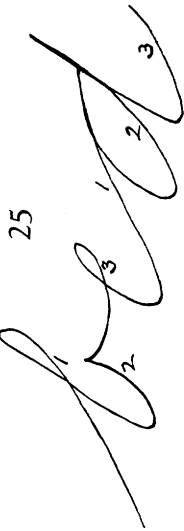
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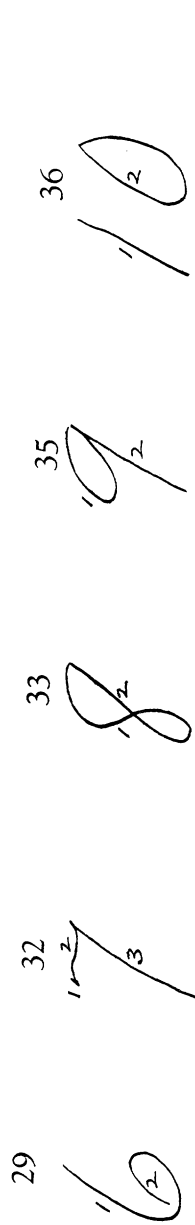
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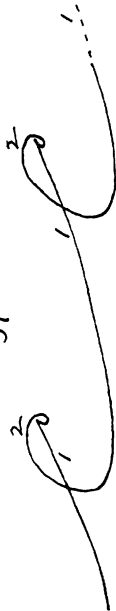
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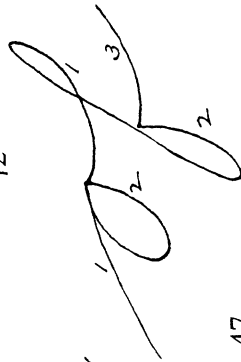
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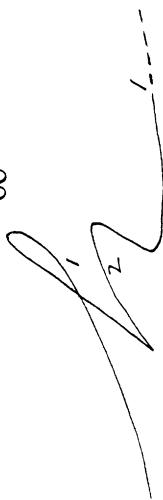
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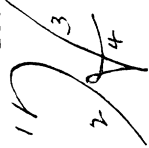
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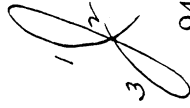
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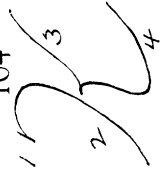
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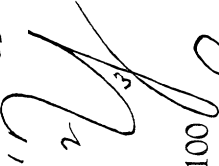
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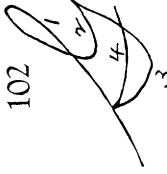
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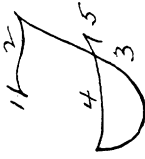
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102



106



The metronome is introduced for the first time at the beginning of the second month. Up to this time the children have not sufficient control to enable them to follow the beat of a mechanical instrument. The teacher must indicate the count with her voice and vary it to suit the capacities of the children. Even now the children will have to be accustomed somewhat gradually to the regular beat. The rate of 50 beats per minute is suggested to begin with.

Space permits only a skeleton outline of the schedule for the exercises week by week. (The lessons are indicated by numbers in parentheses. R stands for review and G for give.) The teacher should comment on each new exercise, call attention to likenesses and differences, caution against common faults, commend good work, help individuals where they have special difficulty, etc.

FIFTH WEEK

(1) R: 3, 4, 7, first with long swing, then with short. R: 9. G: 15.¹

(2) R: 1, 2, 15, 11. G: 16. R: 12, 13, 14. Notice connection between *b* and *w*.

(3) R: 7, 15. G: 17. R: 8, 10, 12, 13, 14. Notice connection between *b* and *e*.

(4) R: 1, 2 (half-line swing), 3, 4. G: 18. R: 9, 15.

(5) Give for record 12, 13, 14, 9, 18, 15, 16, 17. R: 6, 8, 10, 16, 17.

SIXTH WEEK

Metronome at 52.

(1) R: 3, 4 (long swing). R: 7, 18. G: 19, 20. R: 16, 17. Review numbers 1 to 10. Give numbers 10, 20, 30, 40 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 in column formation. Emphasize spacing and column arrangement.

(2) R: 15, 18, 9. G: 21, 22. R: 1 to 5.

(3) R: 18. G: 23. R: 15. G: 24.

(4) R: 1, 2 (half line). R: 23, 24, 7, 17. G: 25.

(5) Give for record 15, 18, 23, 24, 25.

¹ The count on the letter *b* is given in Exercise 17.

SEVENTH WEEK

(1) R: 3, 4 (long swing). R: 7, 9, 15, 23. G: 26, metronome first at 50, then at 56. G: 27.

(2) R: 23, 26. G: 28, 29.

(3) R: 4. G: 30, 31. R: 15, 17, 26.

(4) Review numbers 1 to 6. G: 32, 33.

(5) G: 22, 24, 25, all on one line. G: 10, 17, 6, on one line. Review numbers 1 to 8.

EIGHTH WEEK

Emphasize keeping on the base line.

(1) R: 27, 28, 31, metronome at 52. R: 19, 20, 21, metronome at 56.

(2) R: 27, 30, 31, metronome at 52. G: 34, 35, 36. Notice the "bridge" connections between *w* and *o* and *e*.

(3) R: 18, 26. G: 37. R: 6, 8, 10. G: 38. Contrast *a* and *c* at the top.

(4) R: 16, 17, 19, 22, 37, 38. Give 22 and 38 together.

(5) Give for record 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 34, 38. Practice numbers 1 to 10.

NINTH WEEK

(1) R: 1, 2 (half-line swing). R: 9. G: 39.

(2) R: 20. G: 40. R: 22. G: 41. Notice that the count begins here on the down stroke and that there is a half-count lost between the capital and following small letter. R: 19, 20, with capital *A*.

(3) R: 30, 40, 19, 20 with capital *A*. Give the name of any child which begins with *A*.

(4) R: 26, 29 (short swing). G: 42. R: 30, 31.

(5) Metronome at 58. Give for record 37, 38, 39, 40, and 19, 20 with capitals.

TENTH WEEK

(1) R: 26, 39, 40, 42.

(2) R: 41. G: 43, 44, 45.

(3) R: 43, 44, 45. G: 46, 47, 48.

(4) R: 44, 45, 47, 48. G: 49, 50.

(5) G: 41, 19, 20 with capitals, and 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50 for record.

ELEVENTH WEEK

Metronome at 54.

(1) R: 49, 50. G: 51.

(2) R: 22, 23. G: 52, 53.

(3) R: 22, 23, 28, 52, 53. G: 54.

(4) G: 55. Write names that begin with E. R: 41.

(5) Compare the writing done the last day of the tenth week with that done on the last day of the fifth week, emphasizing points on which improvement is shown.

TWELFTH WEEK

Metronome at 56.

(1) G: 56. Watch spacing and arrangement on the line.

(2) G: 57.

(3) G: 58.

(4) G: 59.

(5) Give a test. Have pupils write on their papers their names and the date. Then have them write for exactly two minutes some easy rhyme they know by heart. Collect and keep the papers for grading and comparison. R: 56, 57, 58, 59.

THIRTEENTH WEEK

Continue to have the children do some blackboard writing.

(1) R: 9, 46. G: 60. Compare *h* with *l* and *n*.

(2) G: 61. Give the numbers by tens to 100 in column.

(3) G: 62.

(4) R: 41, 55. G: 63.

(5) Have names and date written on papers. Have the pupils write the numbers by tens to 100 in column and exercises 41, 55, 63, 58, 59. Collect papers and have children practice on their own names.

FOURTEENTH WEEK

Metronome at 56 for new work and at 60 for review.

(1) R: 63. G: 64, 65.

(2) R: 58, 63. G: 66, 67. Call attention to punctuation.

(3) R: 41, 55, 63, 66, and names beginning with these capitals.

(4) G: 68, 69.

(5) R: 65, 67, 68, 69. Review numbers by tens to 100 and give numbers from 20 to 30 in column.

FIFTEENTH WEEK

(1) R: 67. G: 70. R: 41, 55, 63, 66.

(2) G: 71. R: 62.

(3) R: 71, 72. G: 73.

(4) G: 74, 75. Use the rhyme:

See saw, Margery Daw
Up and down we go.

(5) R: 71, 72, 73, 74, 75.

SIXTEENTH WEEK

(1) R: 74, 75, first with rhyme, then with metronome. G: 76.

(2) R: 75. G: 77. R: 76.

(3) R: 75, 61. G: 78.

(4) Give one row of each number up to 10, then the numbers in sequence to 10. Then give the numbers in columns, ten to a column, up to 99, except 10 to 19.

(5) R: 75, 76, 77, 78, and the numbers in columns as on the previous day.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK

Metronome at 60.

(1) R: 75. G: 79. R: 51. G: 80.

(2) R: 79, 80. G: 81.

(3) Give in columns the numbers 0 to 9 and 20 to 29 with wide space between. Then give 10 to 19 in this space.

(4) G: 82.

(5) R: 79, 80, 81, 82.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK

R: 1, 2 (half-swing), and 74 briefly each day of the week.

(1) R: 9, 60. G: 83.

(2) R: 83. G: 84.

(3) G: 85. Write names beginning with *I* or other capitals already practiced.

(4) R: 85. G: 86.

(5) R: 83, 84, 85, 86, and numbers 1 to 29.

NINETEENTH WEEK

(1) R: 15, 46, 17. G: 87.

(2) R: 87. G: 88. R: 79, 80, 81.

(3) R: 1, 2 (half-swing) once. R: 85, 88, 81. Give the sentence *I have run*.

(4) G: 89 and *My*. G: 90 and *No*. Give names, beginning with the capitals *M* and *N*. Review similar capitals.

TWENTIETH WEEK

(1) G: 91. R: 75. G: 92.

(2) R: 82. G: 93. Review numbers in columns.

(3) R: 89. G: 94. Write other names beginning with *W*.

(4) R: 94. G: 95. R: 73, then give it with capital. Give numbers 10 to 19 in column. G: 96.

(5) R: 92, 93, 94, 95.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK

(1) R: 82, 93. G: 97.

(2) R: 97. G: 98, 99. Set metronome at 66. R: 10 with small letter, then with capital.

(3) G: 100, 101.

(4) G: 102.

(5) R: 98, 99, 101, 102, and numbers 9 to 19 in column.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK

(1) R: 89. G: 103.

(2) G: 104 and names beginning with *K* or review 103.

(3) G: 105.

(4) G: 106.

(5) R: 103, 104, 105, 106. Review numbers 1 to 50 in columns and proper names.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK

(1) G: 107.

The introduction of new letters, both small and capital, is now completed. During the remainder of the year the practice may be devoted to writing sentences, rhymes, etc., which are taken from the other work of the grade, such as reading. Attention may now be directed to the improvement of the form of the writing, but, of course, accuracy of form should not be so emphasized as to interfere with a reasonable degree of fluency.

In studying form it is well to take up one feature at a time. For this purpose the author's "Chart for Diagnosing Faults in

Handwriting"¹ may be found useful. For example, letter formation may be studied during a given week. This quality may be scored by means of the above-mentioned chart and the children encouraged to improve the form of particular letters. Attention may then be directed particularly to the element of spacing. Faults of spacing are responsible for much of the illegibility and poor appearance of writing, and they are comparatively easily corrected. Spacing is particularly important in the arrangement of numbers. Later lessons may be devoted to alignment, while at the same time attention is given to letter formation and spacing.

Quality of line and uniformity of slant may each in turn receive special attention. These features are somewhat more difficult to improve by giving direct attention to them than are the preceding ones, as they depend largely upon the fluency and ease of the movement.

The study of the form of the letters and words should be less minute and critical than in the following grades.

The rest of the year may be devoted to the occasional review of exercises which seem to meet the needs of the class and to continued attention to the elements of form.

The next article will deal with the work of Grades II and III.

¹ Frank N. Freeman, "Chart for Diagnosing Faults in Handwriting." Houghton Mifflin Co. For a description of the chart and its use see *The Teaching of Handwriting*, by the same author and publisher, pp. 123-42.

[To be continued]